

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 10, 2017

Agenda Item: Gallatin Forks Fishing Access Site Bridge Realignment (R3)

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 Min

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Background

Gallatin Forks FAS is located along the Gallatin River north of Manhattan in Gallatin County. The Gallatin County Commission is proposing to realign and construct a new bridge across the Gallatin River at Nixon Gulch to improve infrastructure and travel safety. This realignment will encroach upon the Gallatin Forks FAS at its most northwest corner. The proposed project shifts the roadway and bridge alignment slightly east, approximately 60 feet resulting in impacts to the FAS. Approximately 1/10th of an acre will be impacted.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Gallatin County has received strong public support for the replacement of the Nixon Bridge, as demonstrated by the letters of support. Gallatin County Commission sponsored five public meetings with 57 comments being received regarding the bridge realignment and selection. On April 12, a public meeting was held during the regularly scheduled Gallatin County Commission Meeting to receive comments concerning the Environmental Assessment for the Nixon Bridge. No written comments were received prior to the meeting, and no public comments were received at the meeting.

Gallatin County applied for and receive a grant from the Treasure State Endowment Fund and will be awaiting approval from the 2017 Montana Legislature. The County would then request a perpetual easement from FWP.

Alternatives and Analysis

The project will require FWP to prepare an environmental assessment to develop and evaluate mitigation measures. The project will require new right-of-way from the Gallatin Forks FAS, a site owned and administered by FWP. Gallatin Forks FAS is encumbered by the Land and Water Conservation Fund program and encumbering the site with an easement will constitute a “conversion” of the impacted property.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends that the Commission endorse the agency’s request to pursue the development of this easement. Although a small portion of the FAS will be impacted, travel safety will be improved, as well as the potential for more efficient transport of river sediment.

Proposed Motion

I move the Commission endorse FWP’s proposal to pursue Gallatin County’s easement request for the bridge realignment on the Gallatin Forks FAS.